

Remarks in Hedgesville, West Virginia

August 17, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. And thanks for inviting me here to Hedgesville. It's such an honor to be back in what they call the Mountain State. What a beautiful place. I really—some of them think you can find the heart and soul in Hollywood. I think you find it right here. This is the heart and soul of America, as far as I'm concerned.

I want to thank you all for coming. Thanks for bringing your families. I'm here to ask for the vote. I'm traveling your important State not only asking for the vote but asking for your help. See, we have a duty in this country to vote. We have an obligation in a free society to go to the polls. So I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors, and then, come voting time, head them to the polls. And remind them if they want this country to be safer, stronger, and better, put George Bush and Dick Cheney back in there. With your help, we carried this State in 2000. With your help, we'll carry it again and win a great victory in November of 2004.

I am sorry Laura is not with me today. She's out working. [Laughter] She's asking for the vote. What a great mother and a great wife, and she's doing a great job as our First Lady. I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm running with a good man in Dick Cheney. He's a fine Vice President. I admit it. He's not the prettiest face in the race. [Laughter] I didn't pick him for his looks. [Laughter] I picked him because he can get the job done.

I want to thank Gale for his kind introduction. I appreciate his service to the West Virginia men's basketball team. What a great man he is and a great class act. I'm honored—I appreciate, Coach, that you'd introduce me. I appreciate standing by your side.

I want to thank my friend, Shelley Moore Capito, the Congressman for the great State of West Virginia. I want to thank Don Dellinger, Manny Arvon, and Dr. Bill Queen of the school system around here. I appreciate

you letting me come to this facility, and thanks for working to make sure our kids get a good education here in West Virginia. I want to thank all the people running for office, all the local officials. Thanks for showing up. Most importantly, I want to thank you all. I'm honored you're here. This is a huge turnout, and I'm grateful for it.

I want to thank the Hedgesville High School Marching Band for playing here today. And, of course, I've got to thank my friends the Bellamy Brothers for being here as well. I'm honored they're here.

Listen, I'm here asking for the vote, and I understand one thing about politics, though—there's only one reason to look backwards at the record, and that's who best to lead us forward. We've done a lot together. You think about what we've been through. We've been through a lot, and we've accomplished a lot. But I'm here to tell you there is more to do. We've got more work to do to make this country a hopeful place. We've got more work to do to make sure that our schools work. We've got more to do to keep us safe. We've got more to do to spread freedom, and we've got more to do to make the world a peaceful place.

Audience member. You're the man for the job!

The President. [Laughter] Listen, we've got more work to do to make our schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be, so that no child is left behind in America. You might remember when we came to office 3½ years ago, too many of the children were being shuffled from grade to grade, year after year, without learning the basics. We increased Federal funding, but we've also started to ask important questions: Can our children read and write and add and subtract? We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. And when we find schools that will not teach and will not change, we're bold enough to challenge the status quo.

And we're making progress all across America. We're closing an achievement gap in this country. But there's more work to be done. We want to make sure high school diplomas mean something. We want to make sure we have strong math and science in our

classrooms so our children can compete in the 21st century. We want to make sure we've got Internet in our classrooms so we can bring the latest education to help every child in America. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years a rising generation will have more confidence and more skills to be able to realize the great promise of our country.

We got more to do to make sure quality health care is available and affordable. You might remember all the stale debates on Medicare. Campaign after campaign, they'd come to West Virginia and say, "Put me in office. We'll make sure Medicare is strengthened and modernized." We got the job done. Already more than 4 million seniors have signed up for drug discount cards which will provide real savings for our seniors. And starting in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose a plan that meets their needs and gives them coverage for prescription drugs.

There's more work to be done in health care. To make sure that people get quality care, we've expanded community health centers for low-income Americans. We've established health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their needs. Most people get their health insurance through their jobs, and many small businesses are having trouble affording health care for their employees. We must allow small businesses to pool their risk so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big companies are able to do.

We got to make sure we have technology in health care so—reduce the costs and reduce medical errors. And one thing is for certain: To make sure you've got health care which is affordable and available, we need medical liability reform. See, I don't think you can be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-plaintiff attorney at the same time. I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [Laughter] I made my choice. We need medical liability reform now. In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure that the health care decisions are made by patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

Listen, we've got more work to do to make this economy stronger. We've been through

a lot. We've been through a recession, corporate scandals, and a terrorist attack. Yet, this economy is strong, and it's getting stronger. And the reason why is because we've got great workers in America. We've got great farmers in America. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America, and so is the spirit of our fellow citizens. We've overcome those obstacles, and I think one of the main reasons why, besides the spirit of our country, is because of well-timed tax relief.

We didn't pick winners or losers when it came to tax relief. We said, "If you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief." And we're helping our families by raising the child credit. We're doing something about the marriage penalty. Listen, the Tax Code has got it wrong. We ought to be encouraging marriage, not penalizing marriage.

We're helping our small businesses, and this time the check was actually in the mail. [Laughter] Because we acted, our economy, since last summer, has grown at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added 1.5 million new jobs since last August. The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent. The unemployment rate in this important State is 5.3 percent. The people of this State are working.

I'm not going to rest until somebody who wants to work can find a job. There's more work to be done. In order to keep jobs here in America, we need an energy policy. That includes using West Virginia coal. We need more conservation, more renewable. We need to use the resources we have in environmentally friendly ways. What I'm telling you is, to keep jobs here in America, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We need tort reform. We need to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington. And we need to keep your taxes low. You know, you've heard the talk in this campaign. I'm running against a fellow who has made over \$2 trillion of new spending promises. And so they asked him the other day, they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" He said, "Well, I'm going to tax the rich." You can't raise enough money by taxing the rich to pay for all his promises. So guess who is going to end up paying? Yes. But we're

not going to let him. We're going to win in November.

In order to make sure we keep jobs here, we're going to make sure trade is fair for American workers and American manufacturers and American entrepreneurs. We can compete with anybody, anytime, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair.

In order to make sure we've got jobs here, we've got to make sure our workers are trained for the jobs of the 21st century. That's why I'm such a strong backer in the community college system. The community college system will allow people to go back to work, and we'll provide help for them so they can get the skills necessary to fill the jobs that will exist in the 21st century.

After 4 more years, there will be better jobs in America. After 4 more years, there will be better—a better farm economy in America. After 4 more years, the entrepreneurial spirit will be strong. And after 4 more years, America will still be the strongest economy among any major industrialized nation in the world.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. Our future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning. And since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, young girls go to school for the first time in that country. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a strong and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned

his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. I'm ready for 4 more years.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. He was a threat.

One of the lessons of September the 11th is that this Nation must deal with threats before they fully materialize. I saw a threat, and I went to the United States Congress. I said, "This man is a threat to the United States." They looked at the intelligence, the same intelligence I looked at. They remembered the facts about Saddam Hussein, and members of both political parties, including my opponent, agreed that Saddam Hussein was a threat.

I then went to the United Nations, and I did so because force is the last resort for America. The decision to go to war is the toughest decision a President will ever make. I went to the United Nations in the hopes that diplomacy would work. The United Nations looked at the same intelligence I looked at and the Congress looked at and came to the same conclusion we did: Saddam Hussein was a threat. In the U.N. Security Council, there was a 15-to-nothing vote that said, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. He went so far as to systematically deceive the inspectors that we sent in that country.

So I had a choice to make: Either forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust a madman, or take action necessary to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

Even though we didn't find the stockpiles we expected to find, Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons. And he could have passed that capability on to our enemies. After September the 11th, that is a risk we could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision, and America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq, and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the anti-war candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, the Senator from Massachusetts now agrees with me that even though we haven't found the stockpile of weapons we all believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank the Senator for clearing that up. [*Laughter*] Remember, there's over 75 days left in the campaign. He can still change his mind. [*Laughter*]

I'm running for 4 more years because I understand that we have more work to do to secure our country, to work with our friends and allies around the world, to aggressively pursue the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you can't talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must engage these enemies so we do not have to face them here at home.

America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq. Today I talked to Tony Blair and Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Ministers of great allies. We talked about how to spread peace and freedom around the world. These are important allies, and I appreciate their contributions. I will continue, over the next 4 years, to make sure our alliance is strong. But I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We will keep our commitments to help Afghanistan and Iraq become democratic and peaceful societies. Those countries have now got strong leaders, men dedicated to the future of their countries. You realize over 9 million people have registered to vote in Afghanistan. They long for freedom. They want to be free, and we'll help them. Our military forces will help meet our goal of stable and free countries who are allies in the war on terror by not only providing security but by training Iraqi and Afghan forces so they can stand up and defend their countries. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible, so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

The other day my opponent said if he's elected, the number of troops in Iraq will be significantly reduced within 6 months. That sends a dangerous message. The enemy can wait 6 months and 1 day. It sends the wrong message to our troops in theater. It sends the wrong message to the Iraqis. They're wondering whether or not America means what it says. They're wondering whether or not they are willing to take risks for freedom. They're wondering whether or not tyranny will come back into their land. No, when this country says something, we will honor our commitment. Afghanistan and Iraq will be free.

We've done a lot of hard work and the world is better for it. In these crucial times, our commitments are kept by the men and women of our military. We've got a fantastic military. And I want to thank the veterans who are here for setting the example for those who wear today's uniform. I've seen the decency of our troops, their great courage. The cause of freedom is in really good hands.

I have made a commitment to them and to their loved ones. Our troops will have the resources they need to fight and win this war against the terrorists. This administration has met that commitment. Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. This

funding went for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was an important vote. We received great bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate—such a strong vote in the Senate that only 12 members voted against it, two of whom are my opponent and his running mate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When I asked him about it he said, “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it.” [Laughter] I don’t think that’s the way the folks around here talk. They tell you what’s on your mind. You know, then he got pressed even further and he said he was proud of his vote; then he said, “It was a complicated matter.” [Laughter] There’s nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror. That’s poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. Free societies listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. Free societies are peaceful societies. By serving the ideal of liberty, we’re helping others secure their freedom, and we’re securing our own country. By serving the ideal of liberty, we’re spreading peace that we all long for. By serving the ideal of liberty, we’re serving the deepest ideals of our country. Freedom is not America’s gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God’s gift to each man and woman in this world.

We got more work to do to secure this homeland. There’s an enemy who hate us, and they’re still plotting. It’s the realities of the world we live in. We have a difference of opinion about these people. My opponent said the other day that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. I think the logic is upside down. It shows a misunderstanding of the people that we have to bring to justice. See, during the ninties, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before America went to war with them. They don’t need an excuse for their hatred. It’s wrong to blame America for the evil of these killers. We don’t

create terrorists by fighting back; we defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

We’re working hard to protect the homeland. You got to know there’s a lot of people at the Federal and State and local level working as hard as they possibly can to protect our fellow citizens. And I’m grateful for their contributions and their sacrifice and their hard work. We created the Department of Homeland Security to better guard you. We’ve got better communications between our intelligence networks. The PATRIOT Act is a vital tool so law enforcement can run down these terrorists before they hit America again.

We’ve been working hard to reform everything in Washington, but reform in Washington is hard. [Laughter] There’s a lot of entrenched interests there. It’s hard to challenge the status quo, but I’ve been willing to do so. See, it’s not enough to advocate reform. You have to be able to get the job done.

When it comes to reforming our schools to provide an excellent education for all our children, we’re getting the job done. When it comes to health care reforms to give our families and seniors more access and better choices in health care, we’re getting the job done. When it comes to improving our economy and creating jobs, we’re getting the job done. When it comes to defending America and spreading freedom and peace, we’re getting the job done. And when it comes to electing a President, America must put somebody in the White House who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. You know, these are exciting times we’re living in. It is a time of change, and change can be unsettling. I understand that. But if Government stands side by side with families or workers, it can help a lot. See, I want people owning something in America. I want people owning and controlling their own health care, so if they change jobs, they can take them from job to job. I want people owning and managing their own personal retirement accounts when it comes to Social Security. Listen, the Social Security system is in good shape for

older folks like me. [*Laughter*] It's the younger workers we've got to be thinking about. In order to make sure the younger workers got a retirement system that meets its promises, younger workers ought to be allowed to own their own personal savings accounts.

You know, one of the things I love about America is, more and more people are owning their home. The homeownership rate is at the highest its ever been in this country. What a wonderful idea, when somebody opens their door and says, "This is my home. Welcome to my property." We want more people owning their home in this country. We want more people owning their own business in this country. The small-business sector is a vibrant part of the health of our Nation. When you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In these changing times, there are going to be some things that won't change, as far as I'm concerned: Our belief in liberty and opportunity and the non-negotiable demands of human dignity; the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; the institutions that give us direction, our families, our schools, and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for a culture in life in America where every person counts and everybody matters. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law, instead of legislating from the bench. We stand for a culture of responsibility. You know this culture is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you are a mother and father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the schools here in your neighborhood, you're responsible for doing something about it. You're responsible for supporting your teachers, your principals, the people involved with the schools. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society,

each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

I'm running for 4 more years to continue to rally the armies of compassion. I understand the limitations of Government. Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul puts their arm around somebody who needs some love and says, "What can I do to help you? How can I stand by you? What can I do to make your life better?" Listen, America is going to change one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time because of the armies of compassion in this great land.

For all America, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time when we must have firm resolve, clear vision, and a strong abiding faith in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another one began. I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001, and it is a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hard-hats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I was working the line there to thank people, and a guy looked me in the eye, and he said, "Do not let me down." He took that day personally. The people searching the rubble took it personally. You took it personally, and so did I.

I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every morning thinking about how better to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

Now, we've been through a lot together, and there's more work to be done. During the next 4 years, we will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of a country. We will pass the enduring values of our country on to a younger generation. We will lead the cause of freedom and peace.

You know, when I campaigned around your State in 2000, I said that if you gave me the high honor of serving as your President, I would uphold the honor and the dignity of the office to which I had been elected. And with your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

God bless. Thanks for coming. Thank you all, very much. We're on to victory. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:17 p.m. at Hedgesville High School. In his remarks, he referred to Gale Catlett, former men's basketball coach, University of West Virginia; Don Dellinger, principal, Hedgesville High School; Manny P. Arvon, superintendent, Berkley County Schools; William F. Queen, president, Berkley County Schools Board of Education; entertainers the Belamy Brothers; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy.

Remarks in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

August 18, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. It's great to be here in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. What a beautiful day. You know what I think? I think Wisconsin is "W" country. I'm proud to be here. I appreciate this warm hospitality. You know, my opponent said the other day, "You can find the heart and soul in Hollywood." I think you find it right here in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. I'm glad to be with the heart and soul of America.

And I'm here to ask for your vote. I believe if you're seeking the vote, you've got to go ask for it. I'm here to tell you I've got more work to do to make this country safer and stronger and better for every single citizen. And I appreciate you coming out to say hello.

I'm sorry Laura is not with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w!

The President. No, I know it. She's in Colorado today campaigning. She is a fantastic First Lady, a great mom, and I love her dearly. Listen, I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm running with a good man. They call it the Bush-Cheney ticket. I'm proud to be running with Dick Cheney. Now listen, I admit to you, he isn't the prettiest one in the race. [Laughter] I didn't pick him for his looks. [Laughter] I picked him for his judg-

ment, his experience. I picked him because he can get the job done.

I appreciate the Kell boys for having us over here, John and Tom. I love to come to places where people are entrepreneurial, where people are willing to expand the job base. That's what it's all about in this country, to elevate the entrepreneurial spirit. And the Kells represent that spirit, and I'm honored that you would have us here.

I appreciate being on the same stage with my friend Congressman Mark Green. He's a good man. Treasurer Jack Voight is with us as well. I appreciate you being here, Jack. I'm honored you're here. I want to thank the mayor, Mayor Doug Sandvick, for being here. Mr. Mayor, thanks for coming. My only advice to you, Mr. Mayor, is fill the potholes.

State Senator Dale Schultz, the next Congressman from this part of the world, is with us today. I hope you put him in to the United States Congress. He'll do a fine job for the people of this part of the world. I appreciate all the State and local officials here. I want to thank everybody for organizing this fantastic event.

I know you join me in congratulating the Hamm brothers from the great State of Wisconsin for their performance in the Olympics. I know they made the people of Wisconsin proud. They made this Texan proud too.

Most of all, I want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here, people putting up the signs, the people making the phone calls. I urge you to continue to register people to vote. We have a duty in this country to vote. In a free land, people must participate in the elections. So do your duty as grassroots activists and continue to register people. Convince everybody to vote, and when you get them headed to the polls, remind them George Bush and Dick Cheney are willing and ready to lead this country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm traveling your State a lot. And I'm enjoying every minute of it. You know why I'm coming back? We were close last time. With your help, this time we